

DRAFT
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GOVERNOR BARBOUR ORDERS STOP TO STATE FUNDING TO ACORN

Jackson, Mississippi – Governor Haley Barbour has ordered the state’s fiscal management agency to put a hold on all state funding going to ACORN.

“The recent revelations about ACORN raise serious concern for many of us who take fiscal responsibility seriously, and taxpayers are rightly outraged by the allegations that any of their hard-earned money is going to an organization that has engaged in such suspicious behavior,” Governor Barbour said.

In a letter to the Department of Finance and Administration, the state’s fiscal management agency, Governor Barbour said

, or ACORN, from receiving federal funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The vote occurred during the same week that media reports surfaced of employees from the community organizing group offering advice on how to engage in illegal behavior. These news reports are in addition to the multiple cases of voter registration fraud linked to the group during the 2008 election.

ACORN’s troubled past has many Americans – including hundreds of Mississippians who have contacted me – wondering why their tax dollars are being used to subsidize the group’s activities. Since 1994, ACORN has received at least \$53 million in federal funds, a number that is likely higher considering funds the organization has received from state and local governments that have obtained federal block grants. The Senate was correct in taking action to bar HUD funds from ACORN, but more needs to be done. Out of respect for taxpayers, all federal funding available to ACORN should be cut off.

ACORN’S TROUBLED HISTORY

Like many Americans, last week I watched in disbelief the cable news stories that used hidden camera footage taken in ACORN offices. In one video, two undercover citizen-journalists received advice from ACORN employees on a number of illegal activities, including tax

evasion and prostitution. As the Washington Examiner reported: "The intrepid duo entered those offices seeking advice on getting a loan for a brothel featuring 13-year old girls smuggled into this country from Latin America. They got that and much more, including suggestions on how to conceal the true nature of the enterprise on tax returns." Unfortunately, this was not an isolated event. ACORN is under investigation for voter registration fraud in several states. In a remarkable display of audacity, an ACORN official tried to minimize the allegations, telling the Washington Times that "fewer than 36 ACORN officials have been convicted of fraud." In the days before the 2008 election, a Philadelphia Democrat deputy election commissioner told CNN that ACORN fraud "has been going on for a number of years." As these revelations make clear, there are real and serious concerns over ACORN that warrant action being taken to stop the organization from receiving additional taxpayer dollars. The public outcry over ACORN is beginning to have an impact. In addition to last week's Senate vote barring HUD funds from the organization, other action has been taken out of concern over the group's legitimacy. Two weeks ago, with the help of public and Congressional pressure, the U.S. Census Bureau cut its ties with ACORN.

I support the Census Bureau's decision to end its partnership with ACORN. All other agencies of the federal government should follow their lead. President Obama has the authority to end all taxpayer funding of ACORN, and I believe he should take action to do so. In the event the president fails to act, legislation has already been introduced in the House, called the Defund Acorn Act, which would stop all federal payments to this organization. In these times of record deficits and economic uncertainty, it is now more important than ever that Congress take steps to protect taxpayers' dollars and ensure they are spent wisely. ACORN has continued to prove that it is incapable of using federal dollars in a manner that is consistent with the law. Not one more dime of taxpayer money should be given to ACORN.